

To the Right Honourable  
**The Lords Spiritual and Temporal,**  
 And the Honourable,  
**The House of Commons**  
 In PARLIAMENT Assembled.

*The Humble Petition of many Poor Distressed Prisoners for Debt.*

SHEWETH,

1. **T**hat many by adhearing to his Majesty, and Royal Father, in the late time of Rebellion, lost their Estates real and personal, are become *Paupers*, and in a Starving condition in Prison.
2. That many who are the Children of such persons, are in the like miserable condition; and thereby, many of their Wives and Children are become burthenome to their Parishes.
3. That many are in Prison upon meer Feigned Actions, in the names of Unknown persons, where no just Debt is due, or cause of Action.
4. That divers are Suerties for other mens Debt, the Principals at liberty, and able persons; yet suffer the Suerties to lye in Prison.
5. That Divers Prisoners have Estates lately fallen to them, and are held from the same by unlawful Intruders, Executors, and fraudulent Administrators; who with the Rents and profits thereof, have, and do maintain insupportable Suites at Law, and in Chancery; And by false Actions do continue Prisoners in Custody, that they cannot have Liberty or means to recover their own Estates and Debts from them; well knowing such Prisoners to be poor, and not able to prosecute Suits for relief.
6. That many are Prisoners upon absolute false obtained Judgments; and charged in Execution, where nothing at all is due; the Principal's dead, and the Executors will not Administer the said Judgments, and discharge the said Prisoners.
7. That many are utterly Ruined by Statutes of Bankrupt, their Estates being seized and sold by those Commissioners, and still the persons concerned, detained in Prison, contrary to that Statute; taking advantage of such Prisoners poverty, and disability, to wage Law for Remedy.
8. That by the Plague, the late Dreadful Fire, and the Dutch-War, many Families are ruined and become Prisoners.
9. That many thousands of Prisoners are absolute *Paupers*, not able to pay one penny, and ready to Starve, being defrauded of the Charities given by Benefactors, to sustein them with necessary Food.
10. That several miserable Wretches lye Prisoners in the Nasty-Jayle of the *Marshalsey*, when about 40 *l.* will pay all the real Debts they were first charged with.
11. That many Married Women are Prisoners for Debt, their Husbands being at Liberty.
12. That fundry poor Prisoners have Pawned and Sold to their utmost Abilities, and thereby satisfied their Creditors, yet still are detained for their Fees.
13. That many whom their Creditors (of Charity and pity) have Released, are likewise Prisoners for their Fees.
14. That many Prisoners are in very deplorable Conditions, daily Extorted and Exacted upon by the Jaylors, their Officers and Servants, Put in Dungeons, Iron'd and Lock'd up close Prisoners; their Trunks, Writings, wearing Apparel, and moneys to sustein them with, many times detained from them, only to inforce Extortions, Fees, Bribes, Bonds, and absolute Judgments, without defeasances, for excessive Chamber-Rent and Lodgings, and other most sad Enormities; from whence they cannot be relieved, without some Charitable Act of Parliament.
15. That this hard and uncharitable Custom of keeping poor Prisoners for Debt, even ready to Perish, is not practised in any Christian Country but *England*, (from whence comes that Cruel Proverb, *That they will make Dice of their Bones.* And the Marshal of the *Kings-Bench*, upon the Death of any Prisoner in Execution, returns a Bale of Dice into the Exchequer: ) For the Custom of *Spain* is, That on every *Saturday*, a Judge comes into the Prison, Examines Creditors and Debtors; and if the Debtor be not able to pay his Debts, and give satisfaction to his Creditors, the Judge sets them at Liberty. In *Holland*, if the Prisoner be not able to pay his Debts, then such Creditor or Creditors shall maintain the said Prisoner in Prison according to his or their quality. In *Scotland*, the Procefs is made out against their Estates, and not their persons detained in Prison to be Starved.
16. That the House of Commons have sent up to this most Honourable House several ingrossed Bills for Inlargement of poor Prisoners; yet such is their hard fortune, there is yet none of them Passed, to the Ruine of many Persons and their Families.

*We most humbly therefore Pray, That your Honours would take into your Pious and Charitable Considerations, the most sad and deplorable Condition of so many distressed Wretches, Prisoners for Debt; and no longer let them live in a Languishing and Starving Condition; who if they were at Liberty, might in some time satisfy their just Creditors, and be Serviceable to their King and Country,*

And the Prayers of many thousands will be daily offered up for a Blessing on all your Honours Actions.